# Lessons Learned Record of Interview

| Project Title | | | | |
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| LLP01 – Strategy and Planning | | | | |
| **Interview Code:** | | | | |
| LL-01▮ | | | | |
| **Date/Time:** | | | | |
| August 4, 2015 / 10:30 – 11:30 | | | | |
| **Location:** | | | | |
| SIGAR HQ / Telephone | | | | |
| **SIGAR Attendees:** | | | | |
| Candace Rondeaux, Matthew Sternenberger | | | | |
| **Non- attribution Basis:** | Yes | x | No | |
| **Recorded:** | Yes | | No | x |
| **Recording File Record Number:** | | | | |
| | | | | |
| **Prepared By:** (Name, title and date) | | | | |
| Matthew Sternenberger, Research Analyst, 8/10/2015 | | | | |
| **Reviewed By:** (Name, title and date) | | | | |
| | | | | |
| **Key Topics:** | | | | |

- Introduction and Prior Research
- Current Research
- (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)
- Assessment Tool
- NTM-A Pilot

## Introduction and Prior Research

I devoted years of my life to this work and want to stay engaged with it; my passion is a strange bedfellow with collaboration. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) My emphasis is on complex tasks or programs that have multiple players, with individual missions, that are working with the inter/intra-agency and how each are impacted by the others. This led me to discover a profound difference at the institutional level. I then started to work on how to align efforts at the strategic levels for increased synergy. There was also a profound difference on how to get past individual factors like leadership skills or if personnel knew another actor personally say from school.

*"You don't want to compromise the integrity of individual actors. Civ-mil relations are already so fraught and so important to both of their individual agendas, especially in a place like Afghanistan."*

The chair of my dissertation committee actually rejected my initial, broader research and so I distilled it down to the fine print. My definition of coordination is broader, not just active coordination. There is self-organized coordination that can emerge and can be effective for strategic alignment and improves institutional synergy.

*"We can set conditions to help coordination evolve organically."*

## Current Research

The past eight years I have been the lead researcher for several OSD research grants. The work looks at methodologies, tools, and meta-data to support theories of change or monitoring and evaluation efforts. We piloted it with State/NTM-A and it would be interesting so to you [SIGAR staff] the tools and applicability. This tool helps us look at these wicked problems and their iterative nature by continually updating goals and strategies.

The hyper-local focus is nested within the complex and built at a national-level scale. The tool would be built in with the headquarters (NSC) levels and with grand outcomes. Of most interest to me is the research and mapping out of how coordination played out at higher levels and how it played out horizontally and we where we can best leverage or intervene. To look at this I did several high level interviews including with Lute at the NSC and can possibly distill interview notes and share them. I had voluminous notes and basically have verbatim notes, but will have to ask the interviewees if it would be alright to share.

(b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C)

I left government and (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) called and asked to use me for a proposal on an OSD innovation grant and they really convinced be because of the topic matter. I could earn money and also consult on research directly related to my Ph.D. The line of funding recently whittled down and the next faucet is unknown because the lines of funding are shifting. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) won roughly eight grants over eight years of varying sizes. Some small, like Phase I, or Phase II (~two years, $1.5 million) and some larger, like Phase III (IDIQ, pre-competed). I worked with the Army Corps and O.N.R.. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) I consult and lead the effort alongside the CEO. We also have some IT staff for support. What we developed had a light methodology, but heavy process and had a joint M&E process. It was a light methodology because tools are to be used to support and enhance, not impose. This was cool because it can be used between different planning systems or cultures – joint assessment planning is possible in this environment. It is a light guide to action, not meant to impose.

## Assessment Tool [RTAP?]

This tool suite links outputs to outcomes and helps to visualize the theory of change – it was asynchronous. We map it all out. For example, if we build a school in Afghanistan, will that increase female political participation? Our environment allows to show these steps explicitly. We use logic boxes which are tagged by agency which oversees it all and organizes metrics. It is also linked to timetables and allows one to tailor a metric library. It show trend lines starting from the baseline (it does not look at causality), and does some hypothesis testing. It is organized into different levels for different actors, such as a Commander. Things are color coded and soon we will incorporate causality. (b)(3), (b)(6), (b)(7)(C) is incentivized to do pilot projects by OSD because the money for pilots is usually matched by OSD. The tool provides immediate results and can have tailored visualizations and tailored guidance.

## NTM-A Pilot

With the NTM-A pilot there were a bunch of different plans that were inter-related but not connected and many of the plans were simply saved in Microsoft Word formats. Within hours of

being in Kabul, people were leaning in and started to see how this tool can provide a better planning process. The tool is meant to capture necessary/sufficient conditions, how to redefine/re-test, and organize mental models. We want to capture theories of changes by agency and their necessary or sufficient conditions to achieve goals and how those things are measured.

*"For the NTM-A pilot, we got traction, but people were unwilling to put down anything in the theory of change that was outside of their purview because they might be held accountable for it."*

One example would be improving security in Afghanistan. There were many different lines of effort for DDR but they would only incorporate lines of effort for DDR that they owned the funding for, but not other efforts like from the U.N., NGOs etc. If we could include all the outcomes it might show that the theory of change was wrong or not enough.

We use meta-data behind our causal arrows (historical or anecdotal data) to show why you think this [theory of change] works.

**Next Steps:**

- Setup a web call or possible in-person meeting to show some slides or the tool itself.